

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, ECIN, IT
SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC NOTES ON NEW EC COMMISSIONER LORENZO NATALI

REF: EC BRUSSELS 12466

1. IN SELECTING LORENZO NATALI AS AN EC COMMISSIONER, THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IS SENDING TO BRUSSELS A MAN WHO HAS NOT DEMONSTRATED OUTSTANDING EXPERTISE IN ANY OF THE HIGH POSITIONS IN WHICH HE HAS SERVED AND WHOSE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE HAS DIMINISHED GREATLY SINCE HIS LAST MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENT IN 1973. BORN IN FLORENCE ON OCTOBER 2, 1922, NATALI HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED THROUGHOUT HIS POLITICAL CAREER WITH THE RUGGED, SOUTH-CENTRAL ITALIAN REGION OF ABRUZZO, WHERE HIS FAMILY MOVED WHEN HE WAS AN INFANT. HE REPRESENTS AQUILA, THE REGION'S CAPITAL, IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. HE IS A LAWYER BY PROFESSION. FEW DETAILS ON NATALI'S PERSONAL LIFE ARE AVAILABLE; HIS PERSONALITY IS DESCRIBED AS CORDIAL BUT SOMEWHAT RESERVED. HE IS REPUTED TO BE PRO-AMERICAN AND A SUPPORTER OF NATO.

2. NATALI WAS ACTIVE IN CATHOLIC YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS, AND BECAME INVOLVED IN CLANDESTINE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS DURING THE FASCIST PERIOD. HE FOUGHT IN THE RESISTANCE, WAS WOUNDED AND RECEIVED A MEDAL FOR VALOR. AFTER THE WAR, HE HELD LOCAL OFFICES, AND WAS ELECTED TO THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES IN 1948. HE HAS BEEN REELECTED EVER SINCE, BUT
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HIS TOTAL OF PERSONAL PREFERENCE VOTES DECLINED BY OVER 50 PER CENT IN THE JUNE 1976 ELECTIONS.

3. NATALI'S POLITICAL CAREER HAS BEEN MARKED BY TWIN LOYALTIES -- TO CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER AMINTORE FANFANI AND TO THE REGION OF ABRUZZO. THESE ALLEGIANCES HAVE CARRIED

HIM TO HIGH OFFICE. IN 1955, HE BECAME AN UNDERSECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE GOVERNMENT OF PM SEGNI. HE SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED ON TO SIMILAR JOBS IN THE MINISTRIES OF FINANCE AND TREASURY. HE BECAME MINISTER OF MERCHANT MARINE IN 1966 DURING A GOVERNMENT LED BY ALDO MORO. IN VARIOUS LATER GOVERNMENTS, HE SERVED AS MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, TOURISM AND ENTERTAINMENT, AND AGRICULTURE. HE PRESENTLY SERVES ON THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE CHAMBER. PREVIOUSLY, HE SERVED ON THE LABOR, UNEMPLOYMENT, JUSTICE, FINANCE, TREASURY AND DEFENSE COMMITTEES. IN ALL OF HIS HIGH-LEVEL POSTS, NATALI'S SERVICE HAS BEEN MARKED BY DEDICATED ALLEGIANCE AND DEVOTED SERVICE RATHER THAN BY OUTSTANDING EXPERTISE.

4. ASIDE FROM HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITY, NATALI HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF SMALLHOLDERS (FARMERS) AND PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN ACADEMY OF BIOLOGICAL AND MORAL SCIENCE, A BODY OF WELL-KNOWN PERSONALITIES IN THE FIELDS OF LAW, MEDICINE, CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY. THE ACADEMY PERIODICALLY ORGANIZES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, AND NATALI CHAIRED ONE SUCH MEETING IN TOKYO TEN YEARS AGO ON THE THEME, "MAN AND NUCLEAR ENERGY."

5. WE NOTE THAT DURING THE SPRING OF THIS YEAR NATALI CAME UNDER ATTACK IN TWO PERIODICALS. ONE, L'ESPRESSO, IS A LEFT-LEANING NATIONAL NEWS AND OPINION MAGAZINE. THE OTHER, IL BORGHESE, IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS A NEO-FASCIST INSPRIED ORGAN. BOTH PERIODICALS ALLEGED MISCONDUCT AND CORRUPTION ON NATALI'S PART IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUPERHIGHWAYS. IN ADDITION, L'ESPRESSO ASSERTED THAT NATALI, FAR FROM BEING ACTIVE IN THE RESISTANCE, WAS AN ACTIVE FASCIST

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IN HIS YOUTH AND SUBSEQUENTLY FLIRTED BRIEFLY WITH THE PCI BEFORE FINALLY JOINING THE DC IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD. COMMENT: CORRUPTION IN CONNECTION WITH HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION IS ONE OF THE CASES BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY COMMISSION. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT HEARD NATALI'S NAME MENTIONED IN CONNECTION WITH THE INVESTIGATION, THE SCANDAL CONCERNS THE GENERAL PERIOD DURING WHICH NATALI OCCUPIED CABINET POSITIONS, AND SOME OF THE CONTROVERSIAL HIGHWAYS ARE LOCATED IN ABRUZZO. AS FOR THE ALLEGATIONS ON PAST TOTALITARIAN LEANINGS, WE HAVE SEEN NO OTHER REPORT WHICH WOULD CORROBORATE L'ESPRESSO'S ASSERTIONS. END COMMENT.

6. COMMENT: NATALI IS ONE OF THOSE POLITICANS WHO HAVE HELD HIGH OFFICE FOR YEARS WITHOUT HAVING DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES IN ANY PARTICULAR WAY. WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY POSITIONS WHICH HE MAY HAVE TAKEN IN THE PAST ON EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ISSUES, BUT HIS BACKGROUND AND PAST PERFORMANCE SUGGEST THAT AS AN EC COMMISSIONER HE WILL BE INCLINED TO PROTECT WHAT HE SEES AS THE IALIAN NATIONAL INTEREST. BEAUDRY

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